

Arbor Day

When entering downtown River Falls in the summer, one of the first things you notice is the beautiful flower gardens located on virtually every street corner, in the two parks, and in the Main Street median. Every year since 1993, the River Falls Main Street Program sponsors an Arbor Day event where hundreds of residents spend a morning on the last Saturday in April helping to plant flowers and trees in the downtown and along the Kinnickinnic River. For their gardening efforts, volunteers receive a free t-shirt with a unique Arbor Day logo and a free lunch.



In 1996, over 200 Arbor Day volunteers worked on getting the 44 public gardens ready for planting. They removed tree wrap from hundreds of trees, planted perennials and trees near the local grocery store, and improved the health of the trees in the median by replacing the sand and gravel with nutrient-rich compost. Volunteers also worked to encourage native tree growth along the Kinnickinnic River by cutting back and removing invasive vegetation like box elder and buckthorn as outlined in the River Falls Urban Forestry Plan. The



volunteers then planted 44 trees in the cleared area to create a natural corridor of trees along the walking path. To commemorate the day, third-grade students painted a mural with an environmental theme, and the City of River

Falls received a Tree City USA award. The Main Street Project also presented their Volunteer and Board Member of the Year awards at the event.

The Arbor Day activities and improvements are funded solely by donations and through the sale of Arbor Day calendars featuring local artwork and pictures. In 1996, a new program called Fund-A-Garden was developed, whereby businesses can sponsor a garden for a fee ranging from \$25-\$600. This fee covers the cost of all the necessary plants and maintenance for the garden. Participating businesses receive a plaque placed in the garden they sponsored during the growing season. In 1996, over \$4,400 was raised through donations and garden sponsorships. A portion of the t-shirt and food costs was also donated by local businesses. Several volunteers also donated their time to help the Main Street Volunteer Coordinator weed and water the gardens throughout the summer.

For more information, call the Wisconsin Main Street Program at (608) 266-7531.